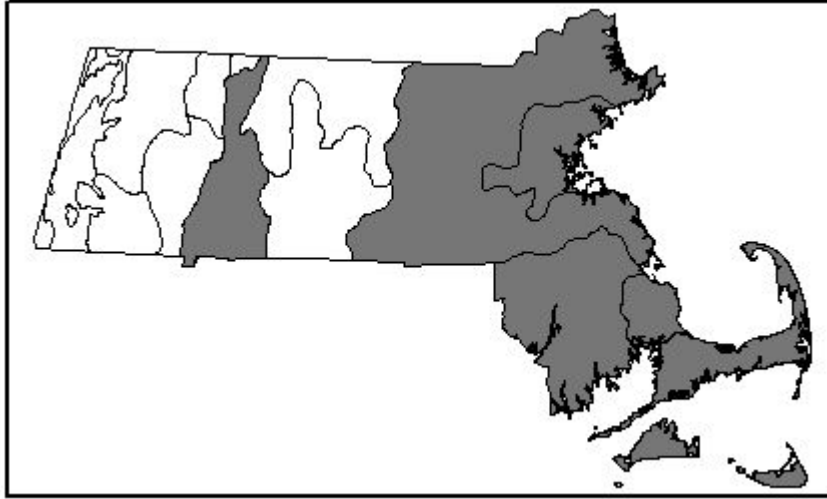


**Community Name:** CULTURAL GRASSLAND

**Community Code:** CT2B2A1000

**SRANK:** -



This distribution map focussed on cultural grasslands occurring on sandplains.

**Concept:** A human created and maintained open community dominated by grasses, normally maintained by mowing; primarily of conservation interest for the grassland bird community.

**Environmental Setting:** A grassland community that generally occurs on sand or other droughty, low nutrient soils. Surroundings, in many areas include Pitch pine / Scrub oak communities. Many small airports with surrounding grasslands were built on sand plains. Pastures and hayfields occur in all areas, and surroundings reflect the regional variations.

**Vegetation Description:** Airports, cemeteries, pastures, and hayfields provide different habitats, and support different species of plants and animals. Grasslands at many smaller airports are dominated by graminoids, usually little blue stem grass (*Schizachyrium scoparium*), Pennsylvania sedge (*Carex pensylvanica*), and poverty grass (*Danthonia spicata*), and many non-native species. Some cultural grasslands do have some mix of herbaceous species, such as goldenrods (*Solidago* and *Euthamia* spp.) and milk weeds including butterfly weed (*Asclepias* spp. and *A. tuberosa*).

**Associations:** Grasslands at airports tend to have more native grasses than do fields that are, or were recently, cultivated. Cemeteries are variable, some older ones have more native species than do more actively managed, newer cemeteries. Most cultural grasslands are mowed at least annually to maintain the grassland stage. Hayfields have fewest native species, but do support grassland birds.

**Habitat Values for Associated Fauna:** Distance to the coast and size of the grassland strongly affect the species that use a grassland. Many species of birds that use grasslands are more common in the midwestern prairies and agricultural fields. Airports currently support Massachusetts' largest populations of Upland Sandpipers (*Bartramia longicauda*), Grasshopper Sparrows (*Ammodramus savannarum*), and Savannah Sparrow (*Passerculus sandwichensis*). Other grassland birds are found in different habitats - such as Bobolinks (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*) in hayfield length taller grass, Eastern Meadowlarks (*Sturnella magna*) in pasture length short grass. Other grassland birds include Killdeer (*Charadrius vociferus*), Northern Meadowlarks (*Sturnella magna*), and Horned Larks (*Eremophila alpestris*). Meadow voles (*Microtus pennsylvanicus*), meadow jumping mouse (*Zapus hudsonius*), and the northern short-tailed shrew (*Blarina brevicauda*) would be expected in most grasslands. They would be hunted by garter snakes (*Thamnophis sirtalis*), long-tailed weasels (*Mustela frenata*), Kestrels (*Falco sparverius*), and wintering Northern Harriers (*Circus cyaneus*), Snowy Owls (*Nyctea scandiaca*), and Short-eared Owls (*Asio flammeus*).

**Associated Rare Plants:**

ASCLEPIAS TUBEROSA	BUTTERFLY-WEED	- WL
LUPINUS PERENNIS	WILD LUPINE	- WL

**Associated Rare Animals:**

AMMODRAMUS SAVANNARUM	GRASSHOPPER SPARROW	T
BARTRAMIA LONGICAUDA	UPLAND SANDPIPER	E
CYCINIA INOPINATUS	UNEPECTED CYCINIA	SC
CICINDELA PURPUREA	PURPLE TIGER BEETLE	SC
FARONIA RUBIPENNIS	THE PINK STREAK	T
POOECETES GRAMINEUS	VESPER SPARROW	T

**Examples with Public Access:** Access is limited at airports. Massachusetts Military Reservation, Bourne and Sandwich; Orange Airport, Orange; Turner's Falls Airport, Turner's Falls; Logan Airport, Boston.

**Threats:** Exotics - especially cool season grasses that form mats. Common non-native species include sheep fescue (*Festuca ovina*), sweet vernal grass (*Anthoxanthum odorata*), velvet-grass (*Holcus lanatus*), bluegrass (*Poa pratensis*), timothy (*Phleum pratense*), and others.

**Management Needs:** Fire management plans should be produced and followed to introduce prescribed fire to the best examples. Reduce exotics where possible.

**Synonyms**

**USNVC/TNC:** Related to: Schizachyrium scoparium - Sorghastrum nutans - Herbaceous Alliance -- Schizachyrium scoparium - Sorghastrum nutans - Hypoxis hirsuta - Baptisia tinctoria Herbaceous Vegetation [CEGL006187]; Schizachyrium scoparium ssp. littorale shrub herbaceous Alliance [sparse woody Grassland] -- Myrica pensylvanica / Schizachyrium scoparium ssp. littorale - Danthonia spicata Shrub Herbaceous Vegetation [CEGL006067]; Danthonia spicata Herbaceous Alliance [possible, no association defined].

**MA (old name):** SANDPLAIN GRASSLAND - CULTURAL COMMUNITY

**ME:**

**NH:**

**VT:**

**NY:** Successional old field, Mowed lawn, Mowed lawn with trees.

**CT:**

**RI:**

**Weatherbee:**

**Author:** P. Swain

**Date:** 7/1/99